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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

A. Requests contained in the draft resolution

1. Under the terms of the following operative paragraphs of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73, the General Assembly would:

> "1. *Recalls* that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries will be convened in the year 2001, and in this regard welcomes the offer of the European Union to host the conference at Brussels and decides to accept the offer;
>
> 2. *Decides also* that the meeting of the intergovernmental preparatory committee envisaged in paragraph 4 of its resolution 53/182 will be organized in New York in two parts, in the third quarter of 2000 and the first quarter of 2001, each for five working days;
>
> ...
>
> 4. *Requests* the Secretary-General of the Conference to organize regional-level preparatory events in collaboration with the regional commissions and other relevant regional and subregional organizations, as appropriate;
>
> ...
>
> 13. *Requests* the Secretary General of the United Nations, with the assistance of concerned organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, to take necessary measures to intensify their public information efforts and other appropriate initiatives to enhance public awareness in favour of the Conference, including by &phighlighting its objectives and its significance;
>
> 14. *Decides* to defray the cost of participation of two government representatives from each least developed country in the intergovernmental preparatory committee meetings and the Conference itself through the use of extrabudgetary resources and, should those resources prove to be insufficient, requests the Secretary-General to consider all other

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options including, the use of unspent balances from the regular budget for the biennium 1996-1997, as an exceptional measure;

...

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and Member States, to make necessary arrangements, through redeployment and using other resources at their disposal, for substantial strengthening of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries through provision of sufficient staff and necessary resources with a view to enabling it to organize effectively and efficiently the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and follow-up its outcome, while carrying out adequately its mandates relating to the least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries;"

B. Relationships of proposed activities to the proposed programme budget for the 2000-2001 biennium

2. The activities arising from the above paragraphs of the draft resolution relate to programme 9 (Trade and development) of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, in particular subprogramme 5 (Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries) (see A/53/6/Rev.1) and to the programme of work included under section 11.A (Trade and development) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (see A/54/6/Rev.1, vol. II), with particular reference to the same subprogramme 5. Activities arising from paragraph 13 are related to programme 23 (Public information) of the medium-term plan and section 26 (Public information) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (see A/54/6/Rev.1, vol. III).

3. In accordance with the outcome of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), least developed countries constitute a cross-sectoral issue in the work of UNCTAD and sectoral issues are dealt with by the divisions of UNCTAD within their respective mandates. Subprogramme 5 also seeks to involve the full mobilization and coordination of all relevant organs and organizations in the United Nations system in support of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.

C. Additional requirements (paragraph by paragraph)

Paragraph 1

4. It is recalled that under the established headquarters principle, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would be held at Geneva. It is, therefore, understood, in accordance with section I, paragraph 5, of General Assembly resolution 40/243, that any additional costs resulting from a change of venue of the Conference from Geneva to Brussels would be borne by the host country or in this particular instance the European Union.

Paragraph 2

5. The holding of the meeting of the intergovernmental preparatory committee in New York would constitute an exception to section I, paragraph 4, of General Assembly resolution 40/243 in which the Assembly stipulates that United Nations bodies shall plan to meet at their respective established headquarters, which in this case is Geneva. Furthermore, it is to be understood that the exact timing of the two sessions of the preparatory committee in the 2000-2001 biennium would be determined taking into account the availability of conference facilities and services and the overall calendar of meetings for the biennium in New York.

6. Furthermore, the meetings of the intergovernmental preparatory committee in New York would entail additional requirements for travel of staff from Geneva to New York to provide substantive services to the preparatory committee as follows:

Ten staff for each session (travel: $500 each; daily subsistence allowance (DSA): two Ds at $2,200 each, and eight others at $1,925 each; terminal expenses: $108 per person): $50,000

Paragraph 4

7. It is proposed to organize two regional-level preparatory events, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), respectively, at the time of the regular annual sessions of each Commission. The additional requirements relate to travel of

three staff members to each meeting to organize and provide substantive servicing to these preparatory events and miscellaneous expenses, as follows:

Three staff for each meeting (travel: $2,400 average; DSA: $150 per day for five days, including travel time; terminal expenses: $108): $20,000

Miscellaneous expenses ($2,500 per meeting): $5,000

Paragraph 13

8. It should be noted that a provision of $163,600 is proposed for information activities in connection with the Third Conference, under section 26 (Public information) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (see para. 26.140 of document A/54/6/Rev.1, vol. 3). These resources relate to the coverage of the Conference itself. In order to enhance public awareness of the Conference it is proposed to provide an additional amount of $30,000 which would be used for dissemination of information on the Conference and its outcome in local languages.

Paragraph 14

9. The cost of the participation of two government representatives from each least developed country to the two preparatory committee sessions and to the Conference itself would be met from extrabudgetary resources. The requirements are estimated to amount to $1,164,500 for the two sessions of the preparatory committee and $500,500 for the Conference. Should the extrabudgetary resources be insufficient, it is the understanding of the Secretary-General that he would be authorized to use in the first instance the remaining portion of the resources approved by the General Assembly in paragraph 2 of its resolution 53/3 for the one-time funding of the expenses of experts attending, in their personal capacity, expert meetings convened by ECA and ESCAP of the Trade and Development Board. As indicated in paragraph 16 of the annex to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the activities financed from the unspent balance from the regular budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/54/501), total expenditures as of 30 September 1999 for the financing of experts amounted to $511,300, as against the original allocation of $1,088,000. The available balance would amount to $576,700. This amount would be sufficient to cover the cost of participation (travel, DSA and terminal expenses) of two representatives from all least developed countries to the first session of the preparatory committee in the year 2000. Should there continue to be a shortfall in the availability of extrabudgetary resources for the participation of the least developed countries representatives in the second session of the preparatory committee and the conference itself in 2001, the Secretary-General would bring that situation to the attention of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session for appropriate action.

10. The payment of travel to representatives of least developing countries as envisaged in paragraph 14 would imply an exception to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1798 (XVII) of 11 December 1962, regarding the payment, out of United Nations funds, of travel and subsistence expenses to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations.

Paragraph 16

11. The proposals of the Secretary-General regarding the programme of work of UNCTAD for the biennium 2000-2001 and the related resources to carry out that programme of work, including the preparations and the holding of the Conference, are contained in sections 11.A and 21 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, which is currently under consideration by the General Assembly. Within the level of resources proposed in the programme budget for that biennium, it is not possible, at this stage, to identify resources which could be redeployed in order to substantially strengthen the Office of the Special Coordinator as requested in paragraph 16. In order to implement the request in that paragraph it is proposed to provide the Office of the Special Coordinator with 48 work months of general temporary assistance (GTA) equivalent to one P-5, one P-4 and two P-3 level posts. The related resource requirements are estimated at $541,400. These resources would provide the Office of the Special Coordinator with additional capabilities to coordinate United Nations system-wide preparations for the Conference, including with the regional commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; assist and support country-level preparations for the Conference; provide advisory services to least developed and landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; support preparations of sectoral thematic reports and substantive inputs for the Conference; carry out research in support of country and regional-level preparations for least developed countries; and liaise with civil society and entities, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, media and academia in preparation for the Conference.

12. The following table provides a summary of the additional requirements referred to in the above paragraphs:

Summary of additional requirements

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Paras.	*GTA*	*Travel of staff*	*Public info.*	*Misc.*	*Total*
2		50.0			50.0
4		20.0		5.0	25.0
13			30.0		30.0
16	541.4				541.4
Total	**541.4**	**70.0**	**30.0**	**5.0**	**646.4**

D. Potential for absorption

13. No provision was included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 for the above-mentioned additional requirements.

E. Contingency fund

14. It will be recalled that under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the proposed programme budget. Under this procedure, if additional expenditures are proposed that exceed the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned can be implemented only through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modifications of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred to a later biennium.

15. No activities could be identified, at this stage, for termination, deferral, curtailment or modification under sections 11.A (Trade and development) and 26 (Public information) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 in order to accommodate the additional requirements of $646,400 referred to in the above table.

16. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.73, additional provisions would be required over and above the resources included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, as follows: $616,400 under section 11.A, and $30,000 under section 26. These provisions would represent a charge against the contingency fund and as such would require a related additional appropriation.